

Hard Corps

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DES MOINES, Iowa — Being a Marine, a leader of many Marines, a husband, a father of three children and a head coach is not easy. Playing so many roles can seem challenging at times, if not overwhelming.

According to Maj. Todd S. Desgrosseilliers, Inspector/Instructor for Company E, 2nd Battalion, 24th Marines, Des Moines, Iowa, and head coach for the All-Marine Rugby Team, being tasked with so much is nothing he cannot handle.

He is a man with a love for rugby as well as the Marine Corps and has the ability to balance both worlds.

"I began playing rugby in college just for fun before I joined the Corps. Now it is more than just fun; rugby is a passion in my life in addition to the Marine Corps. Both are like necessities in my life," said Desgrosseilliers.

According to the 36-year-old Auburn, Maine, native, there are many common attributes when comparing the sport of rugby and being a Marine. Being able to relate the two makes his life easier.

"Rugby is like being a Marine in many ways. Both are physical, continuous demanding sports," he said.

"Similar to war times, rugby requires fast decision making, for example, the fear of tackling the opponent while under pressure," Desgrosseilliers said.

"I get to interact with people outside of the Corps as a head coach," he said. "Through rugby, I get to tell the Marine Corps story."

Desgrosseilliers has been the head coach for the All-Marine Rugby Team since 1998 and was the assistant coach in 1997. Other coaching experiences include: assistant coach for Quantico Men's Varsity Rugby Team in 1996, coach for the USS Independence (CV-62) Rugby Team from 1994 until 1996 and assistant coach, Camp Lejeune "Misfits" Rugby Football Team from 1993 until 1994. He is also currently the head coach for Des Moines, Iowa, Rugby Club team.

Some of Desgrosseilliers' accomplishments as a Marine

include being Honor Graduate of the Amphibious Warfare School, Quantico, Va., graduate of the Corps' Scout-Sniper Instructor Course, Summer Mountain Leader's Course and the Close Quarters Battle Course.

As a Marine, Desgrosseilliers said one of the more demanding challenges he faced was attending Officer Candidates School.

"I was a corporal when I applied for OCS. It was a big transition going from the enlisted side to the officer side. I enjoyed being an NCO too

much," the veteran of 15 years said. "To overcome obstacles that you face, you have to ask yourself, 'How bad do you want it?' and go for it," he explained.

According to 1st Sgt. Raymond H. Esslinger, 1st Sgt., Co. E, 2nd Bn., 24th Marines, Des Moines, Iowa, one of Desgrosseilliers' more distinguishing attributes is his leadership abilities. He is honest; he takes care of his Marines and puts them first.

"If he got any harder, he would rust," Esslinger added.

Desgrosseilliers said he has a basis for his leadership. He lives by four rules: always set the example, do the right thing, do the job right and make it happen.

According to Desgrosseilliers, his primary focus is to train reservists for war readiness, to interact with the community, to foster and to develop a positive relationship with the community and to support other commands.

"I have a lot of respect for reservists. Many of them have full time jobs, so during drill week they work two straight weeks," Desgrosseilliers said. "About 10 percent of them volunteer their time to help out with other tasks. Reservists do all of this just to be a Marine. A lot of people do not recognize their commitment."

He is a Marine of many accomplishments and has overcome numerous obstacles. Through his demonstrated dedication for the Marine Corps he sets

a path for many to follow and live by.

Editor's note: Maj. Desgrosseilliers is currently the Commanding Officer of Recruiting Station Des Moines, Iowa.

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Photo by Lance Cpl. Catherin T. Randall

Leader of Marines, husband, father and coach — Marine Corps Rugby Team head coach -- Maj. Todd Desgrosseilliers.